

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE LABOR AND COMMERCE STANDING COMMITTEE

March 12, 2019

1:32 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Lora Reinbold, Chair
Senator Mia Costello, Vice Chair
Senator Click Bishop
Senator Chris Birch
Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) :

Board of Psychologists and Psychological Associate Examiners:
Dr. Erin Johnson - Anchorage

CONFIRMATION ADVANCED

Board of Dental Examiners:
Brittany Dschaak - Dillingham
Dr. Jesse Hronkin- Palmer
Dr. David Nielson - Anchorage
Kelly Lucas - Wasilla

CONFIRMATIONS ADVANCED

SENATE BILL NO. 11

"An Act relating to temporary courtesy licenses for certain nonresident professionals; and relating to the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development."

-HEARD AND HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 11

SHORT TITLE: MILITARY SPOUSE COURTESY LICENSE

SPONSOR(s) : SENATOR(s) KAWASAKI

01/16/19	(S)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/7/19
01/16/19	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/16/19	(S)	L&C, FIN
03/07/19	(S)	L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
03/07/19	(S)	Heard & Held
03/07/19	(S)	MINUTE(L&C)
03/12/19	(S)	L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

WITNESS REGISTER

ERIN JOHNSON, PhD; Appointee
Board of Psychologists and Psychological Associate Examiners
Division of Corporations, Business, and Professional Licensing
Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Board of Psychologists and Psychological Associate Examiners.

BRITTANY DSCHAAK, Appointee
Board of Dental Examiners
Division of Corporations, Business, and Professional Licensing
Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development
Dillingham, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Board of Dental Examiners.

KELLY LUCAS, DDS, MS; Appointee
Board of Dental Examiners
Division of Corporations, Business, and Professional Licensing
Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development
Wasilla, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Board of Dental Examiners.

DAVID NIELSON, DDS; Appointee
Board of Dental Examiners
Division of Corporations, Business, and Professional Licensing
Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Board of Dental Examiners.

JESSE HRONKIN, DMD; Appointee
Board of Dental Examiners
Division of Corporations, Business, and Professional Licensing

Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development
Palmer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Board of Dental Examiners.

SENATOR SCOTT KAWASAKI
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as sponsor of SB 11.

MERCEDES COLBERT, Staff
Senator Scott Kawasaki
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Introduced SB 11 on behalf of Senator Scott Kawasaki.

SARA CHAMBERS, Deputy Director
Juneau Office
Division of Corporations, Business, and Professional Licensing
Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified and answered questions on SB 11.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:32:07 PM](#)

CHAIR LORA REINBOLD called the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:32 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Gray-Jackson, Costello, Birch, and Chair Reinbold. Senator Bishop joined the meeting shortly thereafter.

CHAIR REINBOLD remarked on the Beltz room, which is named after William E. Beltz, an Inupiaq born in Haycock, Alaska. She said that Mr. Beltz worked as a carpenter and lived in Unalakleet. He served as a member of the Alaska Territorial Legislature from 1949 until 1959, serving in the House and Senate. When Alaska became a state in 1959, Senator Beltz served as the first Senate president in the Alaska State Legislature until his death in 1960.

SENATOR BIRCH mentioned that the late Senator Beltz's grandniece, Lily Beltz, is one of his constituents. He said that she recently came to Juneau as a Close-up student.

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S):
Board of Psychologists and Psychological Associate Examiners
Board of Dental Examiners

[1:33:39 PM](#)

CHAIR REINBOLD announced that the first order of business would be the Confirmation Hearing for Dr. Erin Johnson, appointee to the Board of Psychologists and Psychological Associate Examiners and Brittany Dschaak, Dr. Jesse Hronkin, Dr. David Nielson, and Dr. Kelly Lucas, appointees to the Board of Dental Examiners.

[1:34:00 PM](#)

ERIN JOHNSON, PhD, Appointee, Board of Psychologists and Psychological Associate Examiners, Division of Corporations, Business, and Professional Licensing, Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (DCCED), stated that she currently works for the Southcentral Foundation. She said she is interested in serving on the board to better serve Alaskans. She said she is a lifelong Alaska and received her undergraduate and master's degree from the University of Alaska and her doctorate degree in clinical and community psychology, with a rural emphasis, from UAA and the University of Alaska Southeast. She did her doctoral internship in Nome and spent six years in Nome and in smaller communities in the Norton Sound region. She returned to Anchorage in 2017 to work with Southcentral Foundation's new neurodevelopmental diagnostic team.

[1:36:15 PM](#)

CHAIR REINBOLD opened public testimony, and after ascertaining no one wished to testify, closed public testimony on the confirmation hearing for Erin Johnson, appointee to the Board of Psychologists and Psychological Associate Examiners.

[1:36:31 PM](#)

DR. JOHNSON thanked the committee for their time and service to the state.

[1:37:08 PM](#)

BRITTANY DSCHAAK, Appointee, Board of Dental Examiners, Division of Corporations, Business, and Professional Licensing, Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (DCCED), said she is an appointee to the dental hygienist seat, and is a registered dental hygienist. She received her Bachelor of Science degree in dental hygiene at the University of South Dakota. She worked at a large practice in South Dakota. In 2010, she moved to Alaska and worked in Eagle River and Wasilla while her husband was stationed at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson. In

2015, she and her family moved to Dillingham and she worked for the dentist she currently works for in several offices in rural Alaska. She would like to serve on the board to help streamline the process for dental hygienist licensure and work on policies to better serve rural communities.

[1:39:52 PM](#)

KELLY LUCAS, DDS, MS, Appointee, Board of Dental Examiners, Division of Corporations, Business, and Professional Licensing, Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (DCCED), stated he has been a dentist in Alaska for 33 years. He worked as a public health service officer, as a military officer, and in private practice. He currently has practices in Wasilla and Bristol Bay. He said he understands Alaska's dental issues. He would like to reduce burdens on patients and dental professionals to provide better access to services.

[1:41:30 PM](#)

DAVID NIELSON, DDS, Appointee, Board of Dental Examiners, Division of Corporations, Business, and Professional Licensing, Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (DCCED), said he applied for reappointment to the board. He gave his background, including that he moved to Alaska in 1985 and initially worked at a neighborhood health clinic. He was in private practice until 2012, and currently works for SouthCentral Foundation. Four years ago, he applied to serve on the board because his work schedule allowed him more time. His service on numerous local, state, and dental association positions has given him a unique perspective. He offered his belief that after serving on the board, he better understands his role. He also would like to give back to his profession by upholding standards and protecting the public's interest. He said he thinks it is important to weigh public access in terms of regulating the profession. He characterized public access and public safety as a "delicate balancing act." He said he was a peer review chairman in Anchorage for 20 years and he is willing to keep serving on the board.

[1:44:13 PM](#)

JESSE HRONKIN, DMD, Appointee, Board of Dental Examiners, Division of Corporations, Business, and Professional Licensing, Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (DCCED), stated he earned his Doctor of Medical Dentistry at the University of Louisville in 2004 and could not wait to return to Alaska. He has been in private practice for 15 years. He worked at the Anchorage Neighborhood Health Center and has been president of the Mat-Su Dental Society and the Alaska Dental

Society. He hoped to serve on the board to give back to his profession and to uphold the highest standards of care for the people of Alaska. He said he thinks that his experience in private practice and his service from the professional association's perspective may be beneficial to the board.

[1:45:21 PM](#)

CHAIR REINBOLD opened public testimony, and after ascertaining no one wished to testify, closed public testimony on the confirmation hearing for Brittany Dschaak, Dr. Jesse Hronkin, Dr. David Nielson, and Dr. Kelly Lucas, appointees to the Board of Dental Examiners.

[1:46:03 PM](#)

CHAIR REINBOLD stated that in accordance with AS 39.05.080, the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee reviewed the following and recommends the appointments be forwarded to a joint session for consideration:

Board of Psychologists and Psychological Associate Examiners:

Dr. Erin Johnson - Anchorage

Board of Dental Examiners:

Brittany Dschaak - Dillingham

Dr. Jesse Hronkin - Palmer

Dr. David Nielson - Anchorage

Dr. Kelly Lucas - Wasilla

[1:46:22 PM](#)

At-ease.

[1:47:44 PM](#)

CHAIR REINBOLD reconvened the meeting.

[1:47:49 PM](#)

CHAIR REINBOLD reminded members that signing the reports regarding appointments to boards and commissions in no way reflects individual members' approval or disapproval of the appointees; the nominations are merely forwarded to the full legislature for confirmation or rejection.

[1:48:19 PM](#)

CHAIR REINBOLD announced that the final order of business would be SENATE BILL NO. 11, "An Act relating to temporary courtesy licenses for certain nonresident professionals; and relating to

the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development."

[1:48:31 PM](#)

SENATOR SCOTT KAWASAKI, Alaska State Legislature, as sponsor of SB 11, stated he briefly spoke at the last meeting. He stated that Senator Costello has previously sponsored legislation to address this important issue for military spouses and their families. He said that over 9,000 servicemen and women serve in Fairbanks. He anticipated an additional 4,000 members will move to his region with the F35s. He said that of the 10,000 military at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, over 5,000 are spouses. He said that these spouses work in important professions and certificated programs. He would like them to be able to perform their duties without any barriers. He has been working closely with the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (DCCED) and other legislators in the last few years to ensure that can happen. He related that former Representative Bill Thomas originally introduced a bill in 2011 to expedite courtesy licenses. The bill has evolved and last year it passed the House unanimously. He said he appreciated the work that Senator Costello, as Co-Chair of the Joint Armed Services, did on the bill; however, it did not pass in the final days of the legislative session. He said that SB 11 is the exact language in House Bill 28 in the last legislature. He said this bill is pro-military, pro-jobs, and pro-economy.

[1:50:34 PM](#)

MERCEDES COLBERT, Staff, Senator Scott Kawasaki, Alaska State Legislature, introduced SB 11 on behalf of the sponsor, Senator Scott Kawasaki. She paraphrased from a prepared statement, which read as follows:

Senate Bill 11 would require Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development to report on the progress of drafting and implementing regulations for temporary courtesy occupational licenses for eligible military spouses.

In 2011, House Bill 28 was passed to help ease the transition for military families as they transferred to Alaska. AS 08.01.063 provides expedited temporary courtesy licenses to eligible spouses of Active Duty Service members who already hold a license in another state.

In the fall of 2017, Fairbanks business leaders and legislators found that despite a series of nationwide legislations, military families were still having difficulties transitioning throughout many states, including Alaska, particularly regarding obtaining occupational licenses.

This issue was reiterated in the November 2017, Updated Preliminary Findings of the Eielson Air Force Base Regional Growth Plan. As a part of the study, Focus Groups were conducted among military families to discover what challenges they may face when relocating to Alaska to serve. One of the comments featured in these findings, was "Anyone who has a license in a different state is required to get a new license or certification in Alaska. This is a challenge."

The point of HB 28 was to reduce this same sort of challenge back in 2011, so the fact that one persists shows that there is still some area for improvement.

After the University of Minnesota study, DoD published a document entitled "Evaluation of Licensure Implementation Best Practices," which was provided to members, and featured two examples of legislation regarding occupational licensing for military spouses from Connecticut and Washington. [DOD presents about this]

The main difference between these and HB 28 from 2011, is that Washington and Connecticut's versions include and set requirements for a report that is to be presented to their variation of a Joint Armed Services Committee.

SB 11, the one you are hearing today is directly modeled off these bills. Then-Rep. Kawasaki introduced HB 262 in 2018, which passed the House unanimously and earned bipartisan support in the Senate before it got stalled at the end of session.

In 2017, of 13,396 Occupational License Applications, fewer than 35 were received for the Military Spouse Request for Expedited Application. With more than 20,000 active duty personnel in Alaska and about half of them here with spouses, this very low number seems

to reflect a lack of communication about the program at several levels.

As DOD notes, they found some board staff were not even aware of this opportunity afforded by the 2011 legislation. Some boards are more aware, further along with implementation than others.

[1:53:59 PM](#)

With fewer than 35 temporary courtesy licenses provided that year, yet with thousands of military spouses in the state, it seems there may be a lost opportunity for military families to take advantage of this program that gets them to work quickly and contributing to the local economy.

In Fairbanks, we expect 800-1000 spouses to arrive steadily over the next 10 years alongside more than 1400 direct employees and personnel associated with F-35 platform. As a Senator of a district where many will be living, we want to ensure spouses are afforded as much information as possible about opportunities available to them.

Simply put, by requiring the department to issue a report on military spouse occupational licensure, SB 11 would help facilitate communication between the boards, DCCED, Dept of Defense and military community, and would help keep the legislature informed as to any continual challenges or room for improvement.

It took 7 years for lack of reporting to show there was an issue or shortcoming that could have been provided if a reporting requirement was included in the original bill in 2011. We appreciate the communication by the Division of Licensing since then, in coordination with the Dept of Defense, which we believe was a result of introducing this legislation last year. We hope to keep this going by passing this bill to improve the program.

[1:54:24 PM](#)

What the Bill Does:

Report would include:

- Expedited application procedures

- Progress made for implementing regulations, changes to regulations made to accommodate the needs of military spouses, and any plans for future regulations
- Provide the number and type of the licenses that have been issued
- Provide update about the Department's efforts to inform each board authorized to issue these licenses and how they are working with the military community about informing military spouses they may apply for temporary expedited occupational licenses
- The department shall annually produce and distribute to each board authorized to issue these licenses informational materials to improve the board's knowledge of the licenses, the application process, and best practices in providing applicant support.
- Encourages the designation for a single employee to serve as Point of contact for public information and inquires related to temporary courtesy licenses (which from what the Dept. has said, will be dept. Director Sarah Chambers).

Report would be submitted to JASC on or before March 1 each year, ahead of the annual meeting during session. Department shall consolidate two most recent reports and submit biennial report to legislature on or before March 1 during first regular session.

[1:55:46 PM](#)

WHY JASC? JASC acts as a liaison between military installations and the state, ensuring Alaskans are aware of military missions while reaching out to those who serve the nation here in Alaska. JASC members typically represent areas of the state in or near where military installations are located, where many active duty service members live with their families. The more information available to JASC members, the better military families may be served in return by state lawmakers.

The report would be publicly available, which would help legislators, military community, boards and DOD communicate and coordinate, so spouses are aware of opportunities available to them as they relocate to Alaska in service to the nation.

[1:56:18 PM](#)

SENATOR BIRCH thanked her for the background. He pointed out that licensure is about public safety. He said he is supportive of this bill. He said engineering uses reciprocity to practice in other states. He asked who ensures the licensure has a reciprocal jurisdiction.

[1:57:14 PM](#)

MS. COLBERT deferred the question to the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (DCCED).

[1:57:37 PM](#)

SARA CHAMBERS, Deputy Director, Juneau Office, Division of Corporations, Business, and Professional Licensing, Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (DCCED), stated that the department supports SB 11. It will not change any of the licensing procedures. She said that the department already expedites military spouse licenses and has established credentialing and reciprocity provisions for licensure for most professions.

She said that the department continually looks for ways to improve. For example, the department has drafted a bill it hopes will be introduced in the next few weeks that would offer a temporary license for all licenses. She explained that the bill would bypass the board, which is often the holdup. She offered her belief that this bill is a good way to hold the division accountable.

[1:59:11 PM](#)

SENATOR BISHOP asked whether this bill relates more to accountability and how well the department is performing.

MS. COLBERT answered yes, that is pretty much how it is framed.

[1:59:28 PM](#)

SENATOR BISHOP asked whether he knew how many reciprocity agreements the state has with other states on occupational licensing.

MS. CHAMBERS answered that there are very few national reciprocity agreements, otherwise known as licensure compacts. She said Alaska does not have any, that the state has its own licensure by credentials that says if a licensee holds a license in another state or jurisdiction, that Alaska will make the requirements a little less onerous than if the person is seeking initial licensure. She indicated that licensure compacts are rare and the medical and nursing boards have been discussing it.

However, the legislature has not yet adopted licensure compact legislation.

[2:00:19 PM](#)

SENATOR COSTELLO thanked the sponsor's staff. She said expedited licensure for spouses is a great way to support our military families. She said these professionals give back to our communities. She asked whether she knew how much faster the expedited licensure process will be for military spouses.

MS. CHAMBERS said that it would depend on the license type. She indicated that it could even slow the process down since it would treat the licensee differently. She said the department is working on ways to streamline the process.

[2:01:44 PM](#)

SENATOR COSTELLO asked for information on the top ten licenses in Alaska and the timeframe for license approval for each one.

MS. CHAMBERS asked whether this was from the time somebody applies or when they complete the application.

SENATOR COSTELLO clarified that she meant from the time the applicant contacts the department to the time they have the license in hand.

MS. CHAMBERS offered to provide an overview to the committee that would provide a sense of the different timelines.

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CHAIR REINBOLD remarked that she cosponsored the bill last year. She said that her district represents Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), and this is an important issue to her constituents. She related her personal experiences living in Norway and problems she encountered.

[2:04:55 PM](#)

SENATOR BIRCH expressed his willingness to move the bill.

[2:05:27 PM](#)

CHAIR REINBOLD opened public testimony, and after ascertaining no one wished to testify, closed public testimony on SB 11.

SB 11 was held in committee.

[2:05:48 PM](#)

CHAIR REINBOLD reviewed the upcoming committee schedule.

2:06:30 PM

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Reinbold adjourned the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee meeting at 2:06 p.m.